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Transformation of Urban Public Space

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TRANSFORMATION OF URBAN PUBLIC SPACE

A Thesis Presented

by

Ruthanne Harrison

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Department of Art, Architecture and Art History

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DEDICATION

To Doug Chess for his unwavering support.

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ABSTRACT

TRANSFORMATION OF URBAN PUBLIC SPACE

MAY 2012

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The concept of my thesis is to employ architectural intervention in residual urban space as a catalyst for transformation. The goal is design of a building and environment that could be used for any combination of purposes, be used freely by all members of the community, be designed so that the art and architecture is interactive, and could be transformed by the users of the space. The project makes use of a residual urban space that would otherwise remain largely inaccessible. The project explores how the space could be designed to give a sense of ownership of it to the community, and how it could be designed to reunify areas of the city that have been severed by urban renewal.

The site I have chosen is the Franklin Arterial in Portland, Maine, a four-lane divided surface highway surrounded by parking lots vacant lots, industrial sites and housing projects. Design interventions include a centrally located public market building, which would have a variety of uses throughout any given time period, a bicycle pedestrian path which reconnects the surrounding neighborhoods, and designated sites for art and performance throughout the area.

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CHAPTER 1

DEFINING URBAN PUBLIC SPACE

Introduction

Cities are composed of many types of space, including that which exists between the built environment, wedges of space defined by the infrastructure of transportation, communication, industry and development. This includes what Jacobs refers to as the border vacuums[1], what Trancik calls urban anti-space,[2]. This is the odd shape left over where highways cross, where a once active waterfront goes unused, where a stretch of land borders a campus or large complex, where railroad tracks have been abandoned, where a building has burned and the lot has gone to weeds. This may even be what Koolhaas calls junkspace,[3] after it's final demise: empty shopping centers, obsolete car showrooms, abandoned big box stores or fast food restaurants, and their adjacent parking lots. While people can and do often use this residual space for a multitude of purposes (some of them transgressive), these are not thought of as public space. When we think of urban public space, it is more often parks, plazas, malls, and squares that come to mind. Many of these programmed spaces have been created to be used in a certain way, at specific times, by certain types of people, for a limited set of purposes. Often, the public art that we see has been commissioned for these spaces, sometimes in the form of monuments, sometimes not to be touched, some of it not at all interactive. Mike Davis

1 Jacobs, Jane, *The Death and Life of Great American Cities,* New York, Random House, 1961
2 Trancik, Roger, *Finding Lost Space:Theories of Urban Design*, Hoboken, NJ, Wiley & Sons, 1986
3 Koolhaas, Rem, *Junkspace,* Cambridge, MIT Press, 2002

addresses the negative aspect of this type of space: "The universal consequence of the crusade to secure the city is the destruction of any truly democratic urban space"[4] Much of what we think of as public space is really corporate space, and is not welcoming for some members of society. The activities that can occur there are strictly controlled. Davis goes on to describe a park created near Skid Row in Los Angeles: " …to ensure that the park could not be used for overnight camping, overhead sprinklers were programmed to drench the unsuspecting sleepers at random times during the night."[5] The question arises: who is public space really for? In some downtowns, it may only be for consumers, or for people who look a certain way, or for people whose activities fall within certain parameters.

All users of urban public space want to feel safe and comfortable in that space. How can that be achieved without having to use architecture to create restrictions? Davis goes on to say that in Los Angeles, many new buildings and spaces are fortress-like. While architectural critics make no mention of this, "...urban pariah groups -whether young black men, poor Latino immigrants, or elderly homeless white females-read the signs immediately."[6]

I looked to some theories on urban public space to learn more about what might be possible: Franke and Stevens introduce the concept of loose space: " In urban public spaces around the world people pursue a variety of activities not originally intended for those locations...Accessibility, freedom of choice and physical elements that occupants

4 Davis, Mike, *Fortress Los Angeles, The Militarization of Urban Space*, p.157
5 ibid, P. 161
6 Ibid, p. 159

can appropriate all contribute to the emergence of a loose space."[7]

In *Image of the City*, Lynch discusses the power of edge conditions, many of which are created by highways, rail lines and riverfronts, the same elements that are associated with residual space. Edges, while generally separating and isolating areas, could conversely be seen as a uniting space between two areas. Design intervention in residual space could be used in this way: to knit together the fabric of a city at a crucial border zone. An example of this is the Highline. Vito Acconci, an artist who has been involved in the design of urban public space, writes " The public gathers in two kinds of spaces. The first is a space that *is* public, a place where the public gathers because it has a right to the place; the second is a space that is made public, a place where the public gathers precisely because it doesn't have the right- a place made public by force. "[8] Although not exactly by force, but by public momentum and cooperation, both Le Interstice 56 and the Open Air Library opened up the rights of people to gather in those places. Both were started by a movement of people using the site, which led to architectural intervention, and in the case of the library, eventual government funding for the project. In this type of space, there is a pride of ownership, allowing the spaces to be used safely and freely at any time.

7 Franke, Karen and Quentin Stevens, ed. *Loose Space, Possibility and Diversity in Urban Life*,. Oxon, UK, Routledge, 2007

8 Mitchell, W.J.T., ed. Acconci, Vito, *Public Space in a Private Time, Art in the Public Sphere*, Chicago, University of Chicago Press, p. 159

CHAPTER 2

THESIS PROPOSAL

The Concept

The concept of my thesis is architectural and artistic intervention in residual space as a catalyst for transformation. What would a space be like that could be used for any combination of purposes, be used freely by all members of the community, be designed so that the art and architecture is interactive and could be transformed by the users of the space, and make use of a residual urban space that would otherwise sit abandoned? How could that urban space be designed to give ownership of it to the people of the community, rather than to corporate capital? How could a space like this be a catalyst for the transformation of a blighted downtown? These are the questions I propose to answer in my thesis. My intention is to examine urban anti-space and propose the creation of successful urban public space on such a site. As much of urban anti-space is a product of intertwining highway overpasses, zones between strip development, or border zones between neighborhoods, this issue will become more important as we continue to make the transition from a suburban, automobile oriented society to an urban, walking one. As cities continue to become more diversified, as our economy creates further income disparity, as environmental issues change our choices, how will the concept of urban public space be addressed? Residual space may have uses that are social and economic: a vegetable garden for families to provide food for themselves. It may provide space for a workshop in which people can learn new skills, teach skills, create useful items, or make

art. It may be a space for voices to be heard: free speech, music, public forums, new media. It may be social/recreational: a place to swim, ice skate, fish, or just hang out.

Background Studies

The destructive aspect of anti-space on urban visual order, and use, of cities is described by Jane Jacobs in chapter 14, *The Curse of Border Vacuums,* in *The Death and Life of Great American Cities.*

The main idea put forth in this reading is how large single use sites within the urban fabric create dead zones of borders, which fracture neighborhoods and fragment the city. I read this book while simultaneously reading about suburban sprawl, and began to think about how a well designed urban or town space feels to be in, as opposed to much of what actually exists. I was also reading about Robert Moses, and his many highway projects that fragmented the city,[9] and how Jane Jacobs organized against this trend. Much has happened to American cities since this book was written in 1961, some have declined, some have been revitalized.

I think it is important to look at those cities, both the cities in decline and those that are thriving, to see in what ways anti-space, border vacuums, and vital public space impacts the visual order and fabric of the city. I think it would be important to also explore beyond our culture, to see how this issue manifests itself in European and Asian cities. Jacobs writes about turning border vacuums into seams between a single use site and the city streets. She focuses on examples of how this might be done on the

9 Caro, Robert, *The Power Broker:Robert Moses and the Fall of New York,* New York, Random House, 1974

perimeters of a large park, or on the border zone created by the waterfront. There are successful examples ways that border vacuums and anti-space have been utilized to re-stitch the city together.

In the time that Jacobs was writing, she was often dismissed by the prevailing powers, such as Moses, as an activist housewife. She wrote in an engaging style that was clear to even those who were not urban planners. So perhaps she was not taken as seriously as she should have been at the time. Jacobs was a critic of not only Moses, but she also took aim at Mumford, LeCorbusier, and Ebenezer Howard.

For the time in which she was writing, the early 1960's, Jacobs must have seemed somewhat out of the mainstream of "progress" toward the American Dream of a car, a house in the suburbs, a consumer driven way of life. But Jacobs actually was a capitalist, she wanted city neighborhoods and their individual businesses to survive and thrive. She was questioning the prevailing trend of large scale urban renewal, the building of expressways through city neighborhoods that would make the suburbs more accessible, but do nothing for those city neighborhoods. She was also advocating for mixed use districts, an idea that was antithesis to suburbanization, which dictated that people live in one place, shop in another, work in another and recreate in still another. It was the development of large single-use structures and spaces that led to many of the anti-spaces and border zones.

Jacob's writing had a profound impact on urban renewal. It is said that her writing marked the beginning of the end for Robert Moses. Yet, the cities are still left to deal without the products of urban renewal: there are still large scale single use developments

such as housing projects and highways. There are still underutilized waterfront zones, desolate parks, large hospital campuses that create border zones. In some cities, flight of industry and residents have left abandoned buildings which create anti-space. I would like to examine what the characteristics of these spaces are in 2011, how they impact the lives of users of the city, what has been done thus far to mitigate the issue of border zones and urban anti-space, and what new solutions to this may be. Also, do these border zones exist in small cities and older towns as well as in large cities like New York? Are border zones and anti-space inevitable as the city scape is carved up and developed, or is there a completely different way to look at space?

A major critic at the time the work was published, was of course, Robert Moses (and his supporters) who dismissed Jacobs (and her supporters) as "nobody but a bunch of mothers."[10] This criticism stemmed in part from the fact that Jacobs was a writer and activist, not a (male) city planner. But it also stemmed from the fact that Jacobs argument was powerful-she had ideas that were relevant to the times and changed the prevailing thought on urban renewal, upsetting the balance of power.

Lewis Mumford also expressed criticism in his patronizingly titled 1962 New Yorker article *Mother Jacobs Home Remedies*. Mumford first praises Jacobs refreshing presentation at a Harvard planning conference, but then goes on to excoriate her book.[11] He finds her writing has too much personal anecdote, her solutions to be simplistic, and her dismissal of projects such as Chatham Village, and Garden Cities to be naive.

There is also criticism that her vision failed to take in urban areas such as Los

10 Ouroussoff, Nicolai, *Outgrowing Jane Jacobs and Her New York*, New York Times, April 30, 2006
11 Mumford, Lewis, *Mother Jacobs' Home Remedies,* New Yorker, December 1, 1962, p. 148

Angeles: those that were built around the automobile. An article found in the New York Times states the following, in regard to Jacobs' successful efforts to save Soho from being destroyed for a highway: "The old buildings are still there, the streets once again paved in cobblestone, but the rich mix of manufacturers, artists and gallery owners has been replaced by homogenous crowds of lemming-like shoppers. Nothing is produced there anymore. It is a corner of the city that is nearly as soulless, in it's way, as the super blocks that Ms. Jacobs so reviled."[12] There is also criticism that the New Urbanism movement had taken Jacobs' ideas, used them to create 'urban' centers that have the illusion, but not the gritty reality of the city neighborhoods that Jacobs championed. Of course, these criticisms are more aimed at the ways in which Jacobs ideas were later poorly implemented, not in the core of ideas themselves. Specifically in regard to the chapter 14 reading, there has been much written since Jacobs about border vacuums and anti-space, an issue first identified by Jacobs.

In preparation, I have begun several precedent studies of urban spaces created from a variety of types of residual space. I have also have studied as precedent the work of several artists whose public works relate to the concept I am proposing, in that their work changes perception and/or use of space.

Many new urban spaces revolve not around public gathering for exchange of ideas, socializing, or being a part of community, but for the consumption of goods. Hagen brings up the question of whether we can move forward with a symbiosis of architecture and sustainability when our cultural milieu is so much about consumerism.[13]

12 Ouroussoff, New York Times

The repurposing of residual space lends itself well to the symbiosis of architecture and sustainability, and also to the concept of loose space, but it will be important to study precedents in creating a space where consumerism is not the driving force. Many spaces have a corporate, overplanned atmosphere, interchangeable from city to city. These spaces are somehow lacking authenticity, may discourage any spontaneous activities, and may in effect be inaccessible to some members of society. The spaces that I believe to be most successful are those that retain the aspects of loose space described in Franke and Stevens' book. The artworks I have studied all introduce the concepts of altering perception of a space, and also introduce an aspect of temporality to the public space. Koolhaas and Jacobs both propose that mixed-use (buildings, neighborhoods), and a variety of uses over time (hourly, daily) create vitality. The same case can be made for urban public space: a space that changes, and is changed by the people using it, will be vital, interesting, and well used.

Grant Hildebrand's theories on space will be important in my thesis study. Hildebrand in his writing *Biophilic Architectural Space,* argues that our comfort and preferences for certain spatial characteristics are a result of human evolutionary survival advantages. When our ancestors lived closer to nature, there were spatial and visual characteristics by which they read their environment, thus assuring safety and continued perpetuation of existence.

The five characteristics cited are: prospect, refuge, enticement, peril, and complex order. Complex order calls for distinguishing and arranging certain physical and visual

13 Hagen, Susannah, Taking Shape, A New Contract Between Architecture and Nature, Oxford, Architectural Press, 2001

elements within the environment. Hildebrand likens this to music: ordered complexity in sound creates music as opposed to noise, just as ordered complexity in the built environment creates architecture as opposed to building. He states that order alone is monotonous, while complexity alone is chaotic, but the two together create a situation that is beneficial to comfort and emotional well-being. In thinking about the transformation of urban anti-space in to useful public space, this is an important concept. Anti-space, border zones, are usually chaotic, since they are comprised of the remnants of other uses. Bringing a complex order to a space that is otherwise unreadable would make it a more appealing space for one to enter into and use.

Hildebrand writes that the introduction of some natural elements would be preferable, as studies prove that images of nature (that is images of *ordered* nature, as opposed to wild nature) can reduce stress and shorten hospital stays. So the natural setting must also be a *safe* setting, and Hildebrand introduces the concept of refuge and prospect. Refuge is a small, dark, quiet, safe space from which we can view the other extreme, prospect. Prospect is the open vista, well lit, expansive, the place where opportunity might lie. This is typified by "the cave" and "the meadow". Hildebrand writes that according to Appleton, successful park design uses this contiguous juxtaposition of refuge and prospect.[14] This is another vital piece of information that could work in creating public space, and one which I will refer back to while doing precedent studies. Hildebrand notes that this is used in interior spaces to great effect, and

14 Hildebrand, Grant, *Biophilic Architectural Space*, Kellert, Stephen R., Judith Heerwagen, Martin Mador, ed, Biophilic Design, The Theory, Science and Practice of Bringing Buildings to Life, Hoboken, Wiley and Sons, 2008

cites Frank Lloyd Wright's interiors, with the use of compression and release through changing overhead plane, lighting, and views as an example. Interestingly, there is a gender difference in preference: Hildebrand states that men prefer prospect, while women prefer refuge, and he claims this can be seen in landscape paintings. I would like to see if this proves true in architectural design also.

Enticement is described as a depiction of a trail that disappears around a bend, "a promise that something more could be gained by moving deeper into the setting."[15] As humans, we have an urge to discover and pursue advantages, or be aware of danger, but we do have an instinct to move out of darkness and towards light, ensuring safety. Hildebrand makes a design suggestion of providing a sequence of well lit enticements to lead one through a sequence of designed spaces.

Peril speaks to our need to seek out a certain degree of danger, as part of the survival instinct, just to know that we can respond to, and handle it. But we must ultimately be in control so that peril doesn't turn into anxiety. Examples of peril include skyscraper observation decks and lookout vantage points. Hildebrand gives the example of Botta's San Francisco Museum of Modern Art, with a transparent walkway. I think of the observation tower of the new Penobscot Narrows Bridge in Maine, which is the tallest bridge observatory in the world at 420' above the river, and has floor to ceiling glazing. The Highline in New York offers an opportunity to be observing the street from a vantage point above, while traffic zips by below. Precedent studies will include public spaces which through elevation or visual vantage point offer peril.

15 Ibid

Hildebrand makes a compelling example of all of these five characteristics with a redesign of a retirement complex unit. By changing the height of selected overhead planes, obscuring certain interior views and opening up others, moving the location of glazing to vary light distribution and exterior views, slightly shifting adjacencies and sequences, and changing symmetries, he is able to achieve an improved environment, one that is conducive to the occupant's well being.

We no longer live in the natural environment in which our preferences for complex order, refuge and prospect, enticement, and peril evolved as a means of survival. Yet we still carry the vestiges of these preferences within us, so now we must ensure that they occur in the built environment to assure emotional well-being. Hildebrand suggests that our architecture be a "surrogate" or "microcosm"of nature.

Following are the architectural precedents that I have begun with: The Open Air Library in Magdeburg Germany, The Highline in New York City, Le 56 Interstice in Paris, and Spacebuster, a mobile urban public space. The artists I have looked at who have had an impact on urban public space are: Gordon Matta-Clark, Christo, and Rachel Whiteread. Finally, I have begun to consider some residual space sites that may have potential to become public urban space.

CHAPTER 3

THE ARCHITECTURAL PRECEDENTS

The Open Air Library

The Open air Library**,** designed by KARO Architects, was built in the Salbke district of Magdeburg, Germany in 2009. The site had formerly been a library, which burned down, and there was no money immediately available to built a new one. The concept was first established in 2005, with a community intervention, in which residents helped to construct a 1:1 model of the future library from donated beer crates.[16] The community also donated books, with the current library having over 20, 000 books. Eventually, the federal ministry allotted funds, and Karo Architects designed the current structure, which was opened in June 2009.

Magdeburg is in the northeastern part of Germany, about 75 miles west of Berlin. It is located on the Elbe River. The population is around 229,000. It is a former industrial city ringed by farmland. Until reunification in 1990, it was part of the German Democratic Republic. Many buildings were destroyed during WW II, and the many of the remaining buildings became rundown and abandoned as industry left Magdeburg. There is high unemployment, and some estimates of put the percentage of empty downtown buildings at 80%.

The site of the library is in the Salbke district, at the intersection of a two commercial streets and a residential street. Images of the Salbke district show a mixture

16 Public Space.org, www.publicspace.org/en/prize, 2011

of large housing projects, small single family houses, abandoned industrial facilities, rail lines, and largely empty open spaces. The average temperatures in Magdeburg are 63 degrees F in June, and 24 degrees in December. There are an average of 12 to 16 wet days per month.

The site had been an empty lot since the 1980's, when the former library burned. The architects have stated that "Remembrance, history and narratives provided the background for the "re- occupation" of the abandoned expanse."[17] Since there are so many empty buildings in the district, the architects and community felt that it was not appropriate to build another building. So a different concept of what a library could be was considered. The design concept emphasizes a " green living room with a hard outer skin and a soft core."[18] The space is intended to be a place where all ages can come together. The library is accessible 24 hours a day, both as a site to borrow books, and as a site for a variety of other activities from concerts to meetings to just hanging out. Jacobs' *The Death and Life of Great American Cities*, emphasizes the importance of public spaces which allow people to come and go at all hours, both for the safety reasons and for vitality of a space.[19] The books are kept in unlocked built-in glazed cases, and there are a variety of nooks and surfaces for visitors to occupy while reading or gathering. Structurally, the building provides sheltered space on the north and east sides, and is open to a small outdoor plaza, with walkways and seating structures to the south and east. It is sited within a small triangle created by three roads, and is visually and physically

17 Ibid
18 ibid
19 Jacobs, *Death and Life of Great American Cities*

accessible from the streets, avoiding a “border zone” of dead space between the site and the rest of the urban neighborhood.

The materials and structure of the building are clearly related to the original beer crate structure, as evidences by the articulated square facade panels. The architects wanted to use recycled materials, and found these aluminum panels sitting in a warehouse abandoned in the 1960's. The facade was inspired in form and texture in part by the work of Edward Durell Stone, whose own work often featured similar “grille” facades. The base of the library is painted by local graffiti artists hired by the architects, and employing that strategy has kept graffiti artists from tagging other surfaces of the library. The library was designed to be sustainable: in addition to using recycled materials, it doesn't use heating or air conditioning since it is an open space. Even in the rough environs of Magdeburg, vandalism has been minimal, as the residents have been involved and invested in the project from the very beginning. The library is now managed and maintained by the Salbke community.

This is urban public space that succeeds on many levels. It is integrated into the fabric of the city: it is directly adjacent to the street, in fact the south and west sides of the site open up directly to the street, co-mingling the activities of the street and the library site. One can read the site and the structure very easily, making it feel like a safe place to enter into. It is a public space that is a destination with a purpose: one can go there to borrow books, but even those who aren't there to read can still meet up with friends or sit and observe the street life. There are a variety of spaces designed to allow flexibility- public gatherings, plays, concerts, and meetings take place here. People can read while

sitting and enjoying the open air, children can play , run around, climb or ride bikes. Spatially, the site has a good balance of built structure and open space, which integrate with each other to create a successful open air library

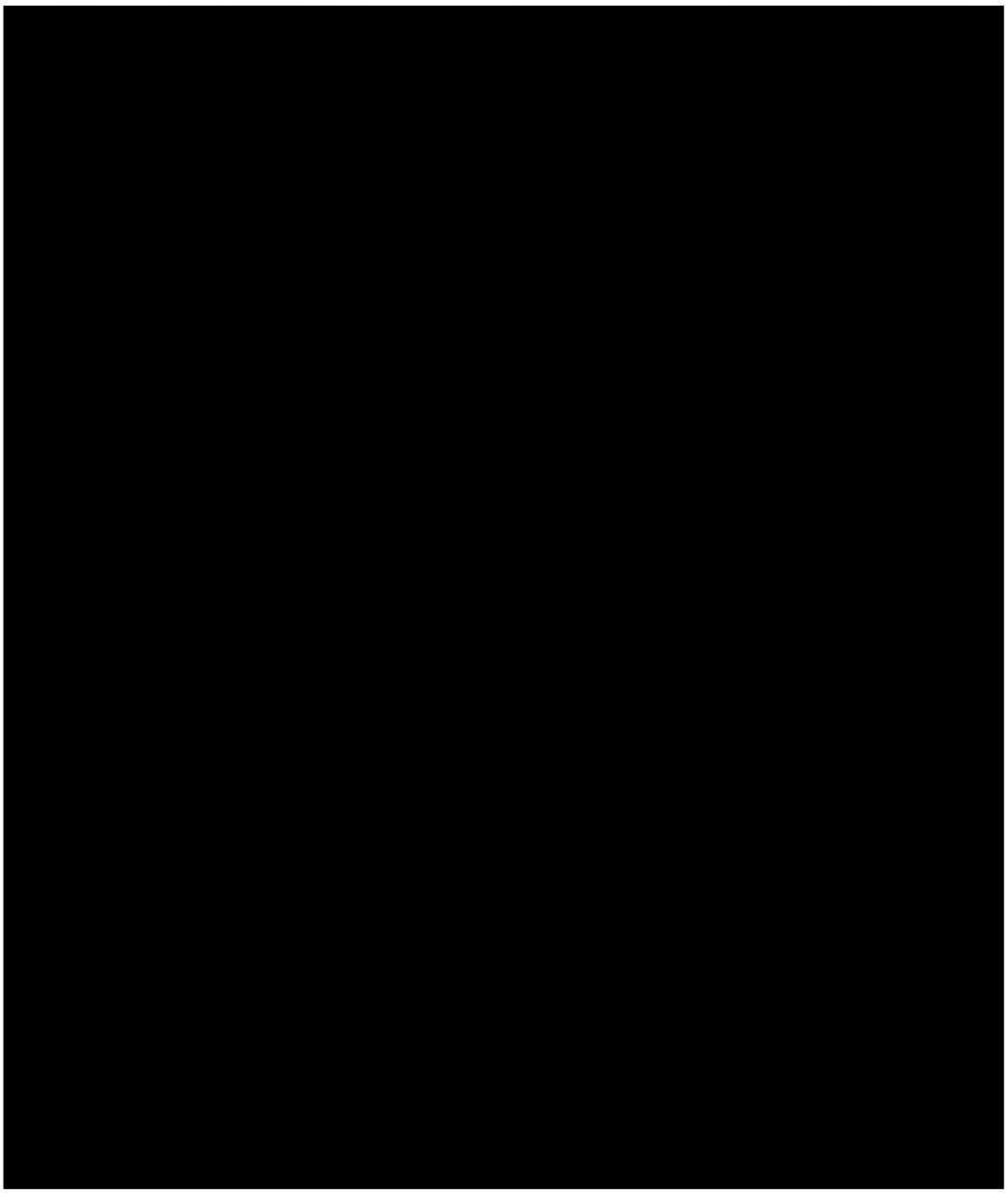

Figure 1: The Open Air Library, figure on file with Architecture Department

The Highline

The Highline is an elevated pedestrian park running from Gansevoort St. to West 20th St. on the west side of Manhattan. It is accessible by stairs and elevators from several points along 10th Avenue. Plans are in place for the Highline to eventually continue to West 34th St. It is open from 7am to 8pm in the winter, 7am to 10pm in spring, summer and fall, year round as weather conditions permit.

Designed by James Corner Field Operations, with Diller, Scofidio + Renfro, the elevated structure was in use as a rail line from the 1930's until 1980, when rail traffic was discontinued on the line. In 1999, Friends of the Highline was formed to begin to study possible uses for the abandoned structure.

A design competition ensued, and a design team chosen in 2004. The Highline opened to the public in 2009. Along it's path, there are distinct nodes that emphasize nature, art installation, vestiges of industry, connection with the city, visual connection to new architecture, framed views beyond Manhattan, and public gathering, both formal and spontaneous.

Running through the Chelsea district on the west side of Manhattan to its termination in the Meatpacking district, the Highline is currently 1.45 miles long, with potential to continue north another twelve blocks to 34th St. It runs along 10th Ave., with points of entrance at Gansevoort, 14th, 16th, 18th and 20th St. The site was a former rail freight elevated structure which pierced through the Chelsea neighborhood, with streets to the east being primarily residential, and streets to the west, from the rail line to the river, being primarily industrial. To the north, the rail lines continue to a rail yard, on the

south is the Meatpacking district, which now features restaurants, galleries and boutiques mingled with some still-existing traditional use.

The concept began with Friends of the Highline forming to discuss possible uses for the abandoned rail structure. The neighborhood had formerly been somewhat run down, industrial, desolate in the evenings. The rail structure, factories, and parking lots of the district effectively cut off the residential and commercial blocks of Chelsea (to the east) from the Hudson River waterfront. During the 1990's, in a postindustrial incarnation, the blocks around the Highline began to attract art galleries, artists, and other related businesses. In 1999, the rail line was scheduled for demolition, and viewing it as a unique asset, a group formed to save it.

The architects are quoted as saying they wanted to preserve some of Chelsea's former grittiness in the design.[20] The iron and steel structure of the Highline is intact, as are vestigial portions of the tracks which once carried trains full of meat to Ganesvoort St. New materials which have been incorporated are sections of corten steel, wood planking, and granite. Photographs of the line after the trains stopped running show a wild landscape, overtaken by nature. This was all cleared out as the structure had to be brought down to bare elements before being built up again. Now there are sections of the park that are planted with the same species of grasses, wildflowers and trees that may have flourished there before, but they are deliberate, designed around walkways of wood and granite that allow for pedestrian accessibility. It will be interesting to see how the planted areas are maintained over time, if they will be allowed to reference the balance of

20 Diller, Scofidio + Renfro, www.dsrny.com, 2011

wild beauty and decay that existed before.

There are many connections throughout the Highline to the surrounding area. The structure of the park itself integrates visually and physically into the city, with several points at which the walkway passes through the structure of buildings. There is a viewing window overlooking Tenth Avenue, which from the street gives the appearance of a living billboard, and from the Highline side, allows one to feel as if they are floating above the traffic. There is a vantage point from which building walls and skywalks frame a view of New York Harbor and the Statue of Liberty. There are opening between the adjacent buildings which frame views of the waterfront's former activity- pier posts and ironwork remaining from the days of shipping and warehouse industry. From the Highline, one also can get varying perspective views of the new architecture surrounding it.

However, when visiting the Highline on a spring day, it became apparent that that is the predominant activity: visiting. There were crowds walking the length of the park, and most of the activity seemed to be centered around people taking pictures of each other on the Highline. In this way, the Highline seemed a bit removed from the everyday experience of the city. In other places where rail beds have been turned into trails, there are more quotidian uses, such as in Cape Cod, where many people use the trail to commute to work by bike. A look at the Highline's website lists the uses that are not allowed: No bikes, no rollerblades or skateboards, no dogs, no frisbees or balls, permits are needed for many types of gathering. There are set hours- if you wanted to use the Highline, for instance, as a route from home to work, you would have to make sure it was

between certain hours. The website also mentions that in phase 2, "there will be a lawn area where the public will be free to walk, play and picnic."[21] One of the criticisms that Jacobs levels at the design of Central Park is that it creates a border zone by not allowing the activities of the adjacent streets to penetrate it.[22] The uses are too restrictive to allow this to become a space that is truly integrated into the city. The concept seems more reminiscent of Olmstead's concept of allowing the masses to remove themselves from the urban environment to experience nature, than with Jacob's concept of weaving public space within the city fabric. So even though the design and materials of the Highline read as an integration with the neighborhood and it's history and uses, the program reads as a traditional park, with an associated level of control in both design and use.

21 Highline,www.the highine.org, 2011
22 Jacobs, *Life and Death of Great American Cities*

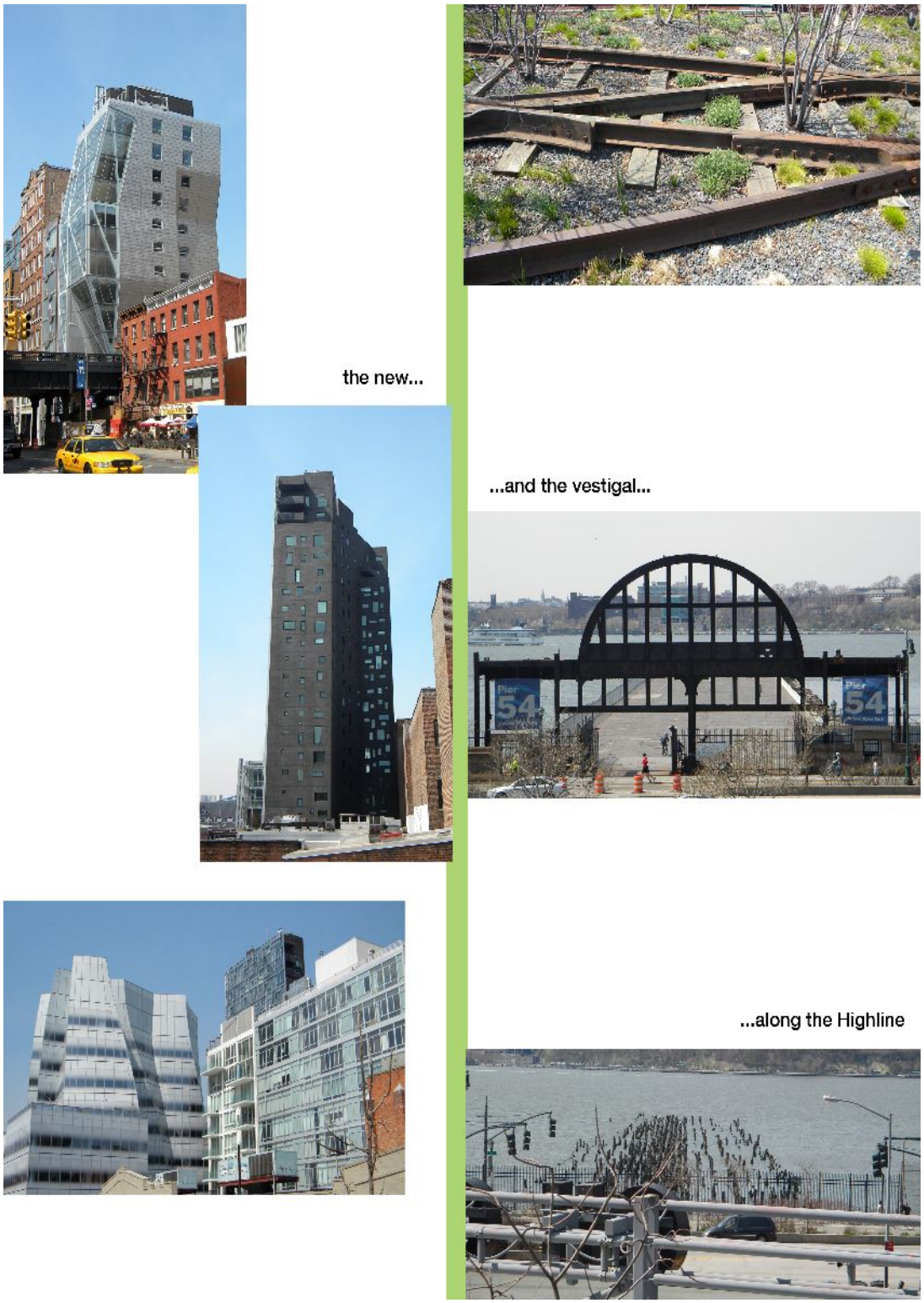

Figure 2: The New and the Vestigial Along the Highline

Framed views

Figure 3: Framed Views

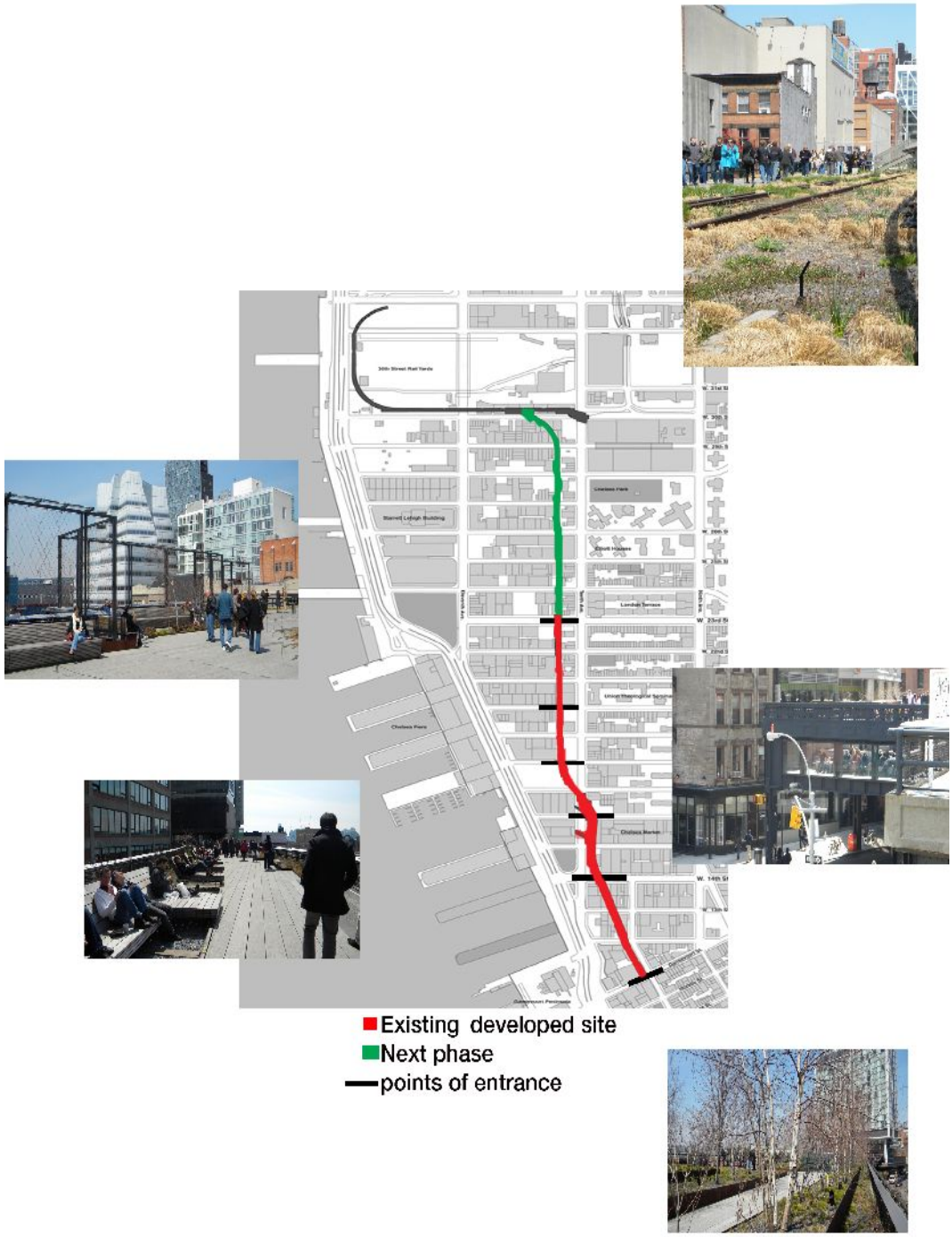

Figure 4: The Highline Site

Figure 5: Land Uses

Le Interstice 56

Le Interstice 56 transforms an alleyway between two buildings into a community garden, composting and recycling center, and a working ecological laboratory. Designed by Atelier d'Architecture Autogeree, the project is a partnership between local government agencies, local organizations, neighborhood residents, and a professional organization which sponsors educational programs there. Le Interstice 56 is an architectural intervention which has involved the community in both the construction and the ongoing utilization of the space. The project was begun in 2007 and completed in 2009.

Located at 56 Rue St. Blaise, in the St. Blaise neighborhood in the east of Paris, the alley was previously filled with trash, basically urban residual space. The site is small, approximately 650 sq. ft. The alleyway had been closed in the 1980's due to other construction in the area, and remained closed as a passageway. According to www.publicspace.org, Rue St. Blaise has become rundown in recent years, businesses have closed, and the street has become somewhat unsafe. Social interaction has been impaired due to the general condition of the neighborhood. The St. Blaise district is a densely populated and culturally diverse area. The climate is temperate, with an average high of 68 degrees Fahrenheit in July, and low of 38 degrees Fahrenheit in January. Precipitation averages are a high of 17 wet days in January, and a low of 11 wet days in July. In January, there are 8.5 hours of daylight, and in July, 15.5 hours of daylight. These statistics are relevant to the gardening aspect of Le 56 Interstice. The intention of the project is transformation of the boundaries of the site into interactive devices, which

rather than separating, multiply exchange and connection. Similar to the Open Air Library, this project was begun with community interaction, recycled building materials, and temporary installations. The structure, suspended between the two adjacent buildings, provides a threshold beneath which one passes to enter the garden, as well as space to hold events. The site is self-sustaining, with solar panels to provide energy, a rainwater collection system to water the garden, compost facilities to both recycle organic refuse and fertilize the plants, and of course vegetable plots to provide food. The project is also socially sustainable, as the space has varying activity throughout the day and the seasons, and brings people from the district together for these activities. The users of the site continue to shape and change the site, making it a public space that is dynamic and flexible. Franke and Stevens discuss thresholds: how they can act to separate and connect simultaneously.[23] The connecting structure in Le 56 interstice is a threshold: an passage that connects Rue St. Blaise to the garden, but also separates the street life from the activities of gathering, gardening and recycling.

Researching this project led me to the term *participatory architecture,* which would describe Le 56 Interstice as well as a previous precedent, the Open Air Library. In the book *Architecture and Participation,* edited by Peter Blundell Jones, it is posited in an essay by Giancarlo DeCarlo that Modernism had a disconnect from the public users of architecture: “By distancing itself from the real context of society and it's most concrete environmental needs, the Modern movement just accentuated the superfluity of architecture.”[24] Participatory architecture invents a new model, in which architects,

23 Franke and Stevens, *Loose Space*

organizations and community members work together. The result is ongoing participation in the project, opportunity for change and adaptability as needed, and a feeling of community ownership. Often this model is used in sites that are reclaimed from residual urban space, where more traditional types of development may not be viable. This type of architecture can be related to site specific works such as Gordon Matta-Clark's *Day's End ,* in which an intervention was performed on a pier warehouse, transforming it from a dark, abandoned structure to a space filled with movement and light; or *Chairsharing,* a design intervention in Modena, Italy, in which a rundown square was revitalized through the installation of moveable internet-wired chairs.[25] Architectural interventions in public space can often be achieved with simple materials used in creative ways.

24 Blundell Jones, Peter, Donna Petrescu, Jeremy Till, *Architecture and Participation*, Oxon, UK, Spon Press, 2005

25 Public Space, www.publicspace.org/en/worksf264-chairsharing, 2011

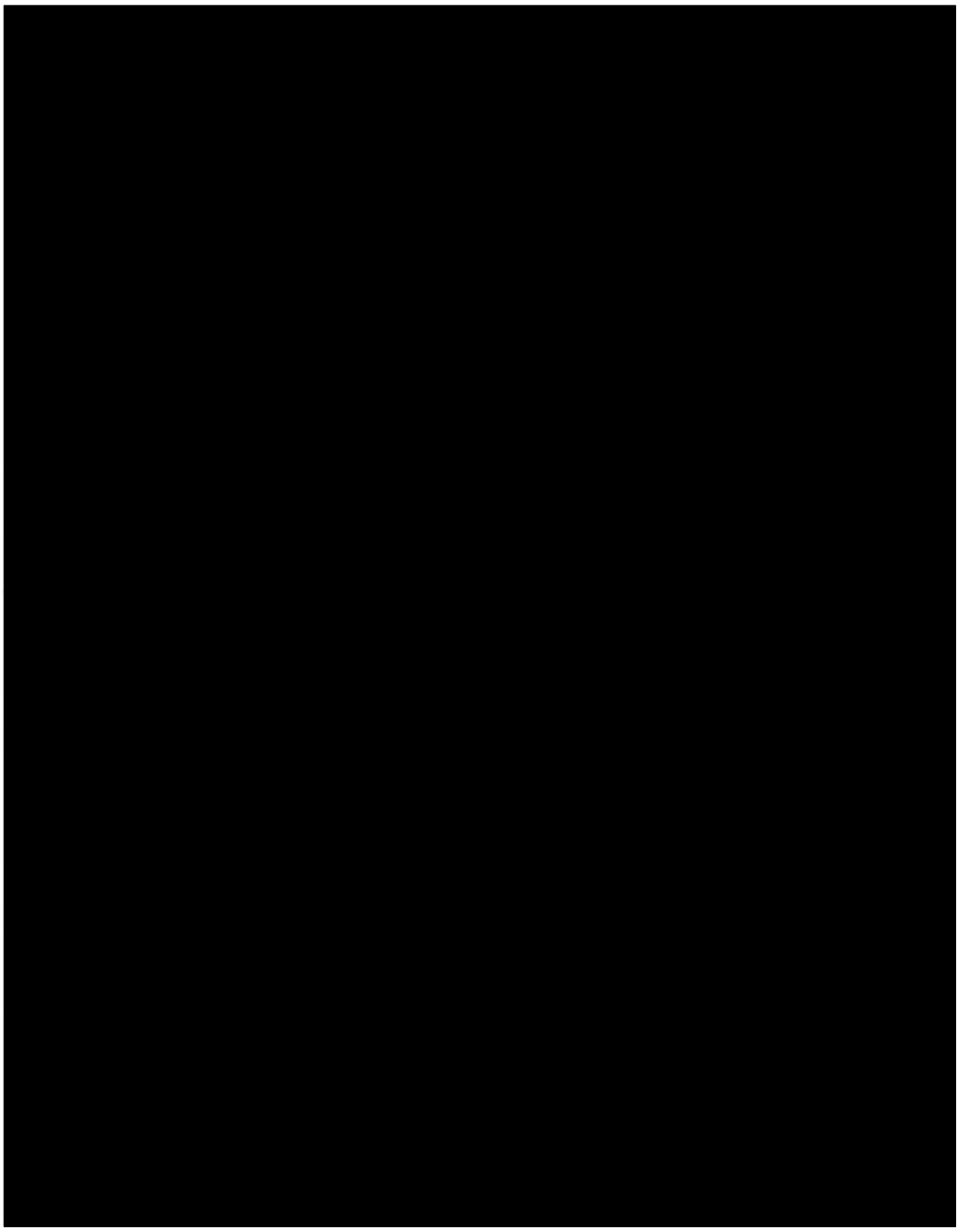

Figure 6: Le Interstice 56, figure on file with Architecture Department

Spacebuster

Spacebuster, designed by Raumlaborberlin, is a mobile unit that can be moved around a city, and create public space in any setting. It is an inflatable bubble that expands from the back of a van, (which it is also stored and transported in.) It is kept inflated by air pressure generated from a fan beneath the van's ramp. Spacebuster can accommodate up to 80 people inside. Spaccebuster is considered a building by the Department of Buildings, a licensed motor vehicle by the Department of Motor Vehicles, and a street event by the Department of Transportation.[26] In New York, Spacebuster created public spaces at: The Highline, the Storefront for Art and Architecture, under the Manhattan Bridge, under the Brooklyn-Queens Expressway, and at other sites around New York.

Spacebuster is non-site specific, it is completely mobile. The sites where it has been inflated are varied: the inflatable bubble of Spacebuster has been installed under elevated highways, in open squares, in parking lots. The flexibility will allow it to take on the shape of the space, and to fit into almost any type of space. Because it is made of translucent material, the city itself is a backdrop to whatever is happening inside. Conversely, those on the outside can easily see whatever is taking place on the inside.

Spacebuster is transformed into something different every time it is used: it takes on a different form, has a different backdrop, and a different relationship to the city. Since space is at a premium in New York, this is seen as a way to make usable a number of types of residual spaces in Manhattan and Brooklyn. The translucency is important: the

26 Raumlaborbarlin, www.raumlabor.net/?p=1799, 2011

space inside can be transformed by what is on the exterior. Light, shadows, patterns of the city streets all work to transform the interior. The visible activity inside, in addition to the inflated form of Spacebuster in turn transforms the residual space, and invites people to use that space, if only for an evening. It has been used for social events, educational activities, and also set up in residual spaces for community meetings to discuss what could happen in that specific residual space.

Spacebuster is an innovative way of calling attention to the residual spaces of a city, with a playful quality, and a form that inspires curiosity from passersby. It is perhaps one of the most temporal of public spaces, and one that has the most potential to be completely transformed by it's users. It adds to the interest and intrigue that it may be in one spot on one day, and in another the next day. However, one issue of Spacebuster's value as an urban public space could be it's physical membrane. Even though there is a visual connection between interior and exterior, the physical boundaries are pronounced. Are the people inside there because someone invited them in? Or is it ok for anyone to step inside? These may be issues that could limit the potential of Spacebuster as public space meant for everyone.

Figure 7: Spacebuster Exterior,
figure on file with Architecture Department

Figure 8: Spacebuster,
figure on file with Architecture Department

CHAPTER 4
THE ARTISTIC PRECEDENTS

Transforming Space Through Temporal Art

Most urban public spaces incorporate some type of art, whether it be civic (a war monument), corporate (large abstract expressionist paintings in office tower atria), collective (a mural depicting the history of a community, painted by local artists) street art (graffiti or guerilla art). There are also hybrid models of urban public space: those that have been created by the symbiosis of art and architecture, and these more often speak to the community or user through interactive elements, transformative spaces, and options for interpretive uses. The following are some of the artists who were/are influential in defining how art can transform space, interact with (or critique) architecture, and engage the public in ways that go beyond just passively viewing a piece of art. In creating an urban public space, it will be important to include an art element that can adapt and change along with the uses of the space. I have researched several artists and projects that incorporate temporality into public art.

Gordon Matta-Clark

Gordon Matta-Clark was the son of Chilean surrealist painter Roberto Matta Eschurran, and American artist Anne Clark. Matta-Clark grew up with his mother and twin brother Sebastian in the United States, while his father lived in South America and Europe. Eventually, family dynamics would intertwine with themes of architecture and

urban decay to influence the art he made . As a young man, Matta-Clark was encouraged by his father to apply his interest in art to the study of architecture. Roberto had studied architecture also, was a friend of both Phillip Johnson and Marcel Breuer and encouraged Gordon to speak with these architects and pursue a degree. Gordon went to study at Cornell in the early 1960's. Critical of his time there, he referred to Cornell as "this prison on the hill[27]. However, it was at Cornell that Matta-Clark began work that combined architecture, sculpture and conceptual performance-based work

Matta-Clark never practiced architecture in the traditional sense. In New York City, he founded a loosely defined movement called Anarchitecture, and used mediums as wide ranging as abandoned buildings, his body, decaying food, fried photographs, and small parcels of real estate as his mediums for creating hybrid types of work that spanned the definitions of art and architecture. Matta-Clark had this to say about the ideas he was exploring: 'My initial decisions were based on the avoidance of making sculptural objects and abhorrence of flat art. Why hang things on a wall when the wall itself is so much more challenging a medium. It is the rigid mentality that architects install walls and artists decorate them that offends my sense of either profession. A simple cut, or a series of cuts, acts as a powerful drawing device able to redefine spatial situations and structural components. What is invisibly at play behind a wall or floor, once exposed, becomes an active participant in a spatial drawing of the building's inner life. The act of cutting through from one space to another produces a certain complexity involving depth

27 Sussman, Elizabeth, *Gordon Matta-Clark: You Are the Measure,* New Haven, Yale University Press, 2007 p. 166

perception." [28]

At this time in New York City, there were scores of abandoned buildings, which became the material for Matta-Clark's pieces. A piece from 1976, *Window Blow Out,* consisted of a series of photographic prints of broken windows throughout the South Bronx, addressing the derelict urban landscape. These reflected Matta-Clarks' activism and social concern over the poor housing conditions that existed. At around this time he was invited, through his Cornell connection, to be part of the show "Idea as Model" at the

Figure 9: Meier's Twin Park Housing, Bronx, NY, figure on file with the Architecture Department

Figure 10: Matta-Clark's *Window Blow Out,* figure on file with the Architecture Department

Institute for Architecture and Urban Resources in New York. Others in the show included Richard Meier, Michael Graves and Peter Eisenman. After the show was up, Matta-Clark returned late at night, and shot out the windows of the gallery, perhaps in a move to emphasize the meaning of his work as opposed to that of the more conventional architectural establishment, who were the ones who had contributed to the housing-project despair of the cities. Eisenman was particularly offended by Matta-Clark's actions, and demanded the piece be removed. As Judith Russi Kirshner and Christian Kravagna write in their essay, "...the critical point was neatly made, with greater power

28 Diserens, Corinne, ed, *Gordon Matta-Clark*, New York, Phaidon Press, 2003 p.188

than any polemic, because the subject of the piece- the Institute itself-was maneuvered into acting out it's message: If this deterioration was intolerable to Eisenman and his colleagues for even a moment, why was it tolerable day in and day out in the South Bronx or Lower East Side?"[29] As for Matta-Clark, he was quoted on the incident as saying, "...these were the guys I studied with at Cornell, these were my teachers. I hate what they stand for!"[30] Interestingly, it would seem that there is a great deal of Matta-Clark's influence in Eisenman's work, and vise-versa. Given that they were working during the same period, it would be difficult to say who influenced who, perhaps it was mutual. But Eisenman's deconstructivist work certainly has similarities to Matta-Clark's architectural intervention pieces.

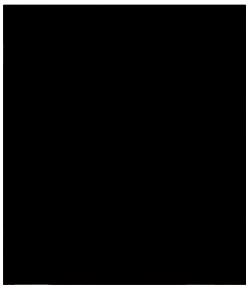

Fig.11: Eisenman's *Falk House*, 1969 Fig. 12: Matta-Clark's *Bingo*, 1974 Fig.13:*Wexner Center,* 1989, figures on file with the Architecture Department

A major architectural intervention made by Matta-Clark was *Day's End,* in which he cut segments out of an abandoned pier warehouse on the Hudson River. In 1975, he secretly broke into and changed the locks on the warehouse, and began making a huge sail-shaped cut into the river side facade. He also made cuts into the floor, which opened to the river below. The opening cut in the wall allowed light to flood into and move through the space, and the revealed water created patterns on the wall when bathed in the

29 Ibid, p.105
30 Sussman, p.166

light. A formerly dark and decrepit space was made into a "basilica"[31] of light through this intervention. Matta-Clark was a diligent documenter of his work, and a film was made of *Day's End.*

The cuts were designed so that the sun would come in at different angles throughout the year, making it a very different spatial experience over time. But this was never experienced, as city authorities soon caught on and shut it down. The building, along with Matta-Clark's elegant intervention, were later demolished.

Figure 14: Matta-Clark's *Day's End ,*
figure on file with the Architecture Department

Figure 15: Day's End,
figure on file with the Architecture Department

In his piece *Splitting,* Matta-Clark uses an abandoned suburban house in a decaying neighborhood to comment on the suburbanization of American society, the isolation and dissolution of the family in the suburbs. Ironically , the former tenants of the house were evicted " due to a redevelopment plan that had split the community."[32] He had taken cuts from houses before, dissected buildings, made holes through layers of structure, but in this piece, the entire structure was to be literally split into two pieces. There was quite a

31 Diserens, p.179
32 Sussman, p. 119

bit of engineering involved in cutting this house vertically down the center, then tilting one section back a few degrees. Corner fragments were dissected from the building, which still remain and have been part of museum exhibits. Matta-Clark, in an interview, commented on the context of his building dissections: “By undoing a building, there are many aspects of the social conditions against which I am gesturing: first, to open a state of enclosure which had been preconditioned not only by physical necessity but by the industry that profligates suburban and urban boxes as a context for insuring a passive, isolated consumer- a virtually captive audience.”[33] He goes on in this interview to critique the modernists (“machine-age moralists”) and to, perhaps glibly, define the difference between sculpture and architecture as “whether there is plumbing or not.”[34] In *Splitting*, it is thought that Matta-Clark may have also been making a more personal gesture regarding his own fractured family, the distance from his father, and his twin brother Sebastian's, (with whom Gordon was very close) increasingly troubling mental illness. Oddly, *Splitting* presages the death of Sebastian soon after, in a fall from the window of Matta-Clark's loft. Like much of Matta-Clark's work, *Splitting* had an influence on architecture, specifically on the house Frank Gehry designed for himself in Santa Monica. In his typical suburban house, Gehry stripped away layers to expose structure, added incongruent construction materials such as plywood and chain link fencing, and ended up with architecture that very much resembles one of Matta-Clark's interventions, with it's exposed layers and oddly cut angles.

In *Complexity and Contradiction In Architecture*, Venturi writes about the tension

33 Diserens, p 182
34 Ibid p. 182

Figure 16: *Gehry House*, 1977-78, figures on file with the Architecture Department

Figure 17: *Splitting,* 1974,

and contradiction that may take place between the inside and outside of a building. Matta-Clark is giving us a glimpse of the space between, dissecting the building in way that almost turns it inside out. Later, other artists such as Rachel Whiteread will make further explorations of inside/outside space.

Matta-Clark made so many other types of work during his too-short life, (he died of cancer at age 35.) Some of it involved decaying food, (food was an abiding interest, he even founded an impromptu diner, called FOOD, with fellow artists), some involved the human body and movement, always photographing everything, once even frying photographs in a pan and giving them as gifts. All of it was heavily concerned with materiality, the effects of time, and spatial relationships. One of his conceptual pieces, *Fake Estate*, consisted of buying at city auction little slivers of land that were left over between larger lots. These were inaccessible and unbuildable. He would then photograph, document, draw up plans of the site, and along with the deed, offer up the whole piece for sale. He was interested in the concept of owning a piece of land that couldn't really be used or experienced in any real way, yet still existed, and could be documented. [35]

35 Jacob, Mary-Jane, *Gordon Matta-Clark:A Retrospective*, Chicago, Museum of Contemporary Art, 1985

Christo and Jeanne-Claude

Another artist creating site-specific, temporal work during this period was Christo. In 1961, he and his partner Jeanne-Claude began the public phase of their work with *Dockside Packages,* wrapping oil barrels with tarps and rope in Cologne Harbor. From the very beginning, they have declined to ascribe a particular meaning to their work, preferring to call attention to the process by which it is created. This has come to include all of the planning, securing the proper documents to wrap prominent landmarks, financing the projects, analyzing the site, studying environmental impact, making many detailed drawings and iterations of the project. By all accounts, the work would seem to be about the engineering, both bureaucratic and structural. In talking about *Running Fence*, Christo refers to the work in terms of structures within the realm of engineering and architecture: "The United States government decided, in the late sixties, that each human activity which has a great impact on human behavior should have an environmental impact statement. The Alaskan pipeline has an environmental impact statement, the Dallas Airport, too. *Running Fence* is the first and only work of art with an environmental impact statement."[36] One observation that can be made about the work is that it engages the public on many levels. There is often publicity and public anticipation surrounding the planning process, as there might be for any prominent new structure to be built in a city. Then from the very technical planning and permitting process, emerges an ethereal, imaginative hybrid of sculpture, architecture and public space. The scale is human enough to invite people in, as with T*he Gates*, yet the scale is also monumental, as

36 Fineberg,Jjonathan David and Wolfgang Volz, *Christo and Jeanne-Claude: On the Way to the Gates, Central Park, New York City,* New York, the Metropolitan Museum of Art, 2004 p.8

in *The Umbrellas*, which was installed simultaneously on two continents. Christo believes that the public discourse, the controversy, and the occasional rejection of permits, adds to the process and the ultimate outcome of the work. The work is all temporary, taken down and materials recycled or donated after a period of time. The temporal nature is important to the integrity of the work. According to Fineberg and Volz, "Christo and Jeanne-Claude's work proceeds on the assumption that the most important contribution of art is its impact on the ongoing development of our consciousness as a culture, and that the object itself has little worth once it's historical effect on its contemporaries has been achieved."[37]

Figure 19: Two ways of altering perception of space: *The Gates* and *Wrapped Reichstag,* figure on file with the Architecture Department

With the installation of *The Gates* in Central Park in 1995, much of the debate centered around the concept of the park itself, a place of controlled, man-made nature, and the role of artistic representation within this setting. *The Gates* had the organic element of the fabric which responded to the wind, much like the trees. But they also had the structural element on which the fabric hung-the gates through which people passed, an architectural element, a doorway. Much of Christo's work changes the perception of a space or an

37 Ibid, p.12

object through the use of materiality, scale, and the placement of forms that are unexpected in a given context.

In one of the ongoing connections and dialogues between the work happening in this period, one of Christo's helpers on Valley Curtain in 1971 was Gordon Matta-Clark, who created a humorous photographic collage about the piece as a gift for Christo.[38]

Rachel Whiteread

The castings of Rachel Whiteread address space in a very different way: by looking at the negative space- making the negative space solid, thereby turning an object inside out. Her work also leaves a reminder of the object that has vanished, destroyed by the process of preserving the space within. Whiteread's interest is in human-made objects and structures: furniture, vessels such as tubs, houses and buildings, monuments. One can see these interests apparent in photographs she makes of old mattresses abandoned on the street, half-demolished buildings, broken furniture. They have an eerie quality of human imprint: as if someone had just been sitting there.

The piece that brought Whiteread critical attention was *House*, in which she cast the whole interior of a Victorian house slated for demolition in London's East End. The casting, monumental in every way, brought up issues of displacement, vanishing community and way of life, homelessness, the death of a neighborhood and a time. The piece stirred up controversy. In his essay Stuart Morgan writes, " A period, a way of living, family life, a community, a neighborhood, a friendship...To local residents, many

38 Jacob, Mary Jane, *Gordon Matta-Clark, A Retrospective*, Chicago, Museum of Contemporary Art, 1985 p.41

Figure 20: Whiteread's photographs and castings: *Untitled (Bath*), *Untitled (Amber Bed),* figure on file with the Architecture Department

of whom has lived in the area during wartime, House was the graveyard of all this: a sealed bunker like an overground vault, as well as an eyesore, a waste of space and money."[39] The work was demolished after only four months, at the urging of a council member who's district the piece was in. Originally, Whiteread had intended the piece to remain there for a year. She spoke about the demolition: "... The main reason I was sad when *House* was demolished was because I never really had a chance to see it properly, because making a work in the street is very different from making work in the studio... [the council] didn't want any memory of the piece. However, people continue to tell me their memories of seeing *House* and I'm very proud to have made it, but I'm sad. I don't think it completely lost its dignity, but its dignity was rather hijacked."[40] In some ways, though, this seems to reflect the life cycle of the city and architecture. Neighborhoods are dynamic, buildings are demolished and new ones built, places continue to exist only in memory. Whiteread's work brings to mind Bachelard's Poetics of Space: the strength of the emotional impact of a place imprinted on the senses.[41]

39 Bradley, Fiona, ed. *Rachel Whiteread: Shedding Life,* New York, Thames and Hudson Inc., 1997, p. 28
40 Rewired Now, www.google.com/sites/rewirednow
41 Bachelard, Gaston, *Poetics of Space*, Boston, Beacon Press, 1994

Whiteread was chosen in 1996 to create the *Judenplatz Holocaust Memorial* in Vienna. She designed a piece to be a casting of the interior of a library, it's shelves full with books of the millions of stories of lives that would never be told. The piece is powerful in it's stark silence. But a controversy erupted when it was discovered during site work that a synagogue had once existed there in the 1400's, and it had been a site where dozens of Jews took their lives rather than submit to Catholic pressure to denounce their faith. [42] It was suggested that the memorial be sited elsewhere, but Whiteread successfully countered that the work had been specifically designed for the site, and it would lose integrity of design and meaning to be moved.

Figure 21: Two different types of memory: Judenplatz Holocaust Memorial and House, figure on file with the Architecture Department

Whiteread's work brings up issues that could be relevant to future planning on many scales: urban planning, redevelopment of neighborhoods, whether to demolish or save a

42 Connolly, Kate, *Closed Books and Stilled Lives,* www.guardian.co.uk/world/2000/oct/26

building, preservation of historical sites, preservation of sites of remembrance. The work resonates for anyone who, like Bachelard, has had the experience of physical recall of a house long gone- the scents, the feel of one's footfalls on the stairs, the sound of a screen door slamming shut in the breeze.

Each of these artists produced large scale public pieces that altered residual space. The most striking to me is Matta-Clark's *Day's End.* He perhaps used the most abandoned of spaces, and by artistic/architectural intervention, created a space that would alter itself over time (as the sunlight passed through the openings he cut), and used the structure and materials of the residual space itself as part of the piece, (in the process revealing more of the structure). To a certain degree this is done in the Highline also. The existing structure is preserved and even revealed a bit more fully. The element of time is inherent in the linear nature of the space.

CHAPTER 5

THE SITE AND THE PROGRAM

The Next Phase

The next step in my research has included another group of precedent studies that are both architectural interventions in public spaces, and also collaborative art/architecture interventions.

One such collaboration is the *Leona Drive Project* in Toronto, in which art/architectural interventions were done on a series of small post-war bungalows slated for demolition to make way for ever-increasing new development. The artists wanted to call attention to the places where people were actually living, and being displaced from. Another project, *Make This Better*, in Windsor, Ontario, is using a variety of interventions to call attention to the increasing desertion and abandonment of downtown areas. The website brokencitylab.org documents these and other related projects in Ontario. *The Heidelberg Project* in Detroit has been transformed through an artist Tyree Guyton's vision from a desolate area of abandoned houses to an interactive urban sculpture park.[43] I have researched railway stations for both architectural structure, and due to Portland's link to railway history. Two of the stations I looked at closely are Waterloo Station in London, and Southern Cross Station in Melbourne, Australia, both designed by Nicholas Grimshaw. For specific information on public markets, I studied the Reading Public Market in Philadelphia, and for how market architecture could revitalize an area, the

43 The Heidelberg Project, www.heidelberg.org/, 2011

Santa Caterina Market in Barcelona.

It is important to research transformation of residual spaces in cities that have experienced post-industrial decline, to document how spaces are used, and how and if they have initiated changes in the urban neighborhood. I have looked for parallels to the urban sites in Maine that I am considering. Much as William H. Whyte did in his documentary,[44] I will observe spaces over a given time, to see how the users of the space effect changes within the space throughout the day. Next steps include observation, documentation and analysis of both public spaces that are successful, and those that are not. This research, when possible, will be done through site visits.

In considering a thesis site, I looked at sites in Augusta, Lewiston, and Portland, Maine. Augusta and Lewiston, both former mill cities, had any number of abandoned spaces that could be potential sites. Both cities are located on rivers, and have interesting mill and railroad infrastructure. Augusta is the state capital, but it's downtown has been all but abandoned. In the past year, the University of Maine Architecture and Art departments had donated to them a five storey building in the downtown, with street level exhibition space. It is possible that a new influx of students to the area will help. Lewiston has a demographic mixture of older French-Canadian families whose ancestors came to work in the mills, and young Somali families who are revitalizing the downtown with new restaurants and businesses. Portland already has a livelier downtown than either of the other two cities, but there are still many remaining residual sites among the highway, rail and waterfront areas that border the downtown. I wanted a site near to the

44 Whyte, William H., *The Social Life of Small Urban Spaces* (film) www.vimeo.com/215556697, 2011

downtown central part of the city, as in Maine most outlying areas are accessible only by car. As one goal is for this public space is to be accessible to and used by as many different people as possible, to be truly public, this is an important consideration.

The site ultimately chosen for my thesis is the Franklin Arterial in Portland, Maine. The area that I will be focusing on is from the intersection of Somerset and Franklin, south to the intersection of Middle and Franklin, and the areas directly adjacent to the east and west. I chose this site because it represents a condition that exists in many older urban neighborhoods throughout the United States.

The Site

Franklin Arterial was created in 1967, as part of a master planning design by Victor Gruen. The objective was to make Portland more vehicle friendly, since at the time the city was losing population to the suburbs.[45] Previously the arterial was known as Franklin St., and it was a narrower street, filled with commercial buildings and residences. Surrounding Franklin St. were the Bayside and Little Italy neighborhoods, much of which were razed in 1958 in a slum clearance initiative.[46]

The resulting four lane surface highway separated the neighborhoods, and resulted in a street exclusively for vehicular traffic. There are few sidewalks for pedestrians. The wide center median is currently unusable, as there is no safe pedestrian access. There are several desire paths across the median, which are approximately where side streets once crossed Franklin.

45 http://www.portlandmaine.gov/planning/peninsulafinalreport.pdf
46 http://franklinstreet.us/history-of-franklin-arterial

In the length of Franklin from Somerset to Middle, there is only one building which still fronts on the road, an apartment building between Cumberland and Congress Sts. All other buildings turn their sides or back to the road, most separated by lots and chain link fencing.

The site roughly divides the Portland peninsula running north/south from I-295 to the Casco Bay Ferry Terminal at Commercial St. There is a new bike path just north of the site which connects to various recreational areas throughout the city. The site gradually slopes downward from north to south.

On the west side of the site, beginning at Somerset St., the character of the Bayside neighborhood is industrial, with warehouses, manufacturing and trucking businesses. Moving south, the area becomes residential, with a mixture of older woodframe one- and multi-family dwellings, and newer low income housing units. At the corner of Cumberland St. is Franklin Tower, a senior housing project, which at 17 storeys is the tallest building in Portland (and Maine). It was built at the same time as Franklin Arterial. Between Cumberland and Congress St., there is a large surface parking lot, which is accessible from Congress St. (Congress St. is a main commercial thoroughfare.) South of Congress is Lincoln Park, a largely underutilized public park. Beyond this is the courthouse, the police station, and then Middle St., which is pedestrian friendly, and leads westward to the Old Port, and eastward to a neighborhood of small restaurants and shops.

On the east side of the site, the neighborhood consists of several housing projects, Bayside Terrace, Bayside East and Kennedy Park. There is a thriving community garden situated between the housing and Franklin Arterial. Beyond the public housing, the

neighborhood is made up of older woodframe or brick single and multifamily houses. The East Bayside area is mostly residential, with a mix of cultures, a younger population, and many interesting streets to explore.

According to the East Bayside Neighborhood Study by the Muskie School of Public dwellings, represent 21 countries of origin."[47]

Continuing south, between Cumberland and Congress St., is the Cathedral of Immaculate Conception, and the church school. South of Congress St. is another residential area, along with remnants of Portland's Italian section, restaurants, small groceries and shops. The whole length of the Franklin Arterial and adjacent streets are within a short walk to downtown Portland.

The City and the Region

Portland is the largest city in Maine, with a population of 64,000 in the city, and 230,000 in the metro area.[48] The average temperature is 16 degrees in January, and 66 degrees in June. Wet days per month range from 12.2 in December down to 8.9 in September. January averages 19 " of snowfall. Prevailing winds are from the west. Portland receives approximately 9 hours of sunlight on Dec. 21, and 16 hours on June 21.[49]The city is located in the southern coastal area of Maine, on Casco Bay, Cumberland County. It is 106 miles from Boston, 325 miles from New York City, and 275 miles from

47 http://www.ci.portland.me.us/planning/603finalreport.pdf

48 http://www.portlandmaine.gov/

49 http://www.gaisma.com/en/location/portland-maine.html

Montreal. Portland is linked to other parts of Maine primarily by car, with some limited bus service. Train service is scheduled to expand north from Portland to other parts of Maine in 2012. I-95 is a route to inland cities such as Lewiston and Augusta, I-295 and US 1 link the city to the rest of coastal Maine. There is limited bus service between cities in Maine. Public transportation links to other regions include flights from the Portland International Jetport, Concord Bus Lines and Amtrak. Within the city and metropolitan area there is a Metrobus system which runs frequently.

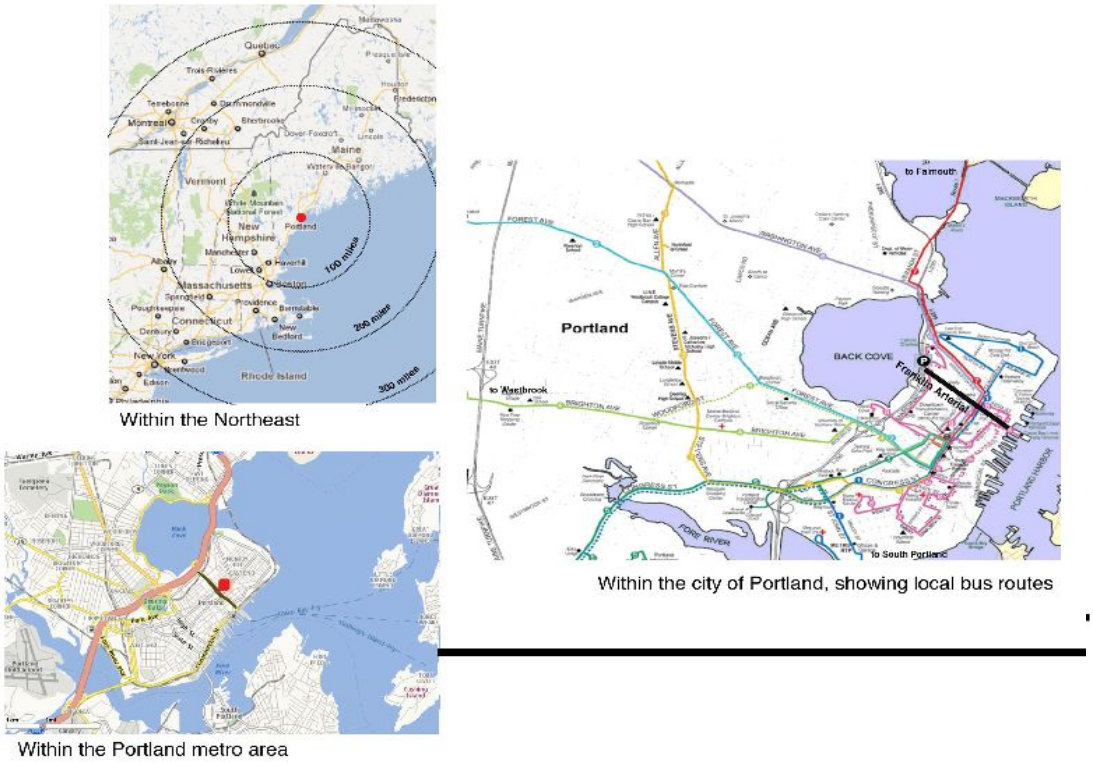

Figure 21: The City and the Region

Casco Bay contains over 300 islands, several of which are part of the city and are inhabited year round. Ferries regularly leave from the Casco Bay Terminal, which is at the southern terminus of Franklin Arterial on Commercial St. There is also a cruise ship terminal nearby. The geological composition of the Casco Bay area is made of glacial

marine deposits (silt and clay) and glacial till over bedrock[50]. The city is 75 feet above sea level.

The Program Proposal

The existing conditions at Franklin Arterial make it a difficult and dangerous barrier to cross. Even though it passes through residential areas on it's way toward downtown, residents can't access this route on foot or bicycle. Those who live on the northeast side, in the housing projects and lower income neighborhoods are cut off from the downtown. An afternoon of observation found many children and families trying to dodge traffic and cross on a desire path at Oxford St..

According to the East Bayside Neighborhood Study conducted by the Muskie School of Public Service, "Participants voiced particular concern for children who currently frequent this shortcut to school."[51] It is also difficult to walk the length of Franklin, because there are no sidewalks, and the shoulder is narrow and steep in places. In addition to bringing Bayside residents downtown, there is the potential to bring visitors, who mainly visit the Old Port and Commercial St., to explore the neighborhoods further north and east along Franklin. A first step would be to create pedestrian/bike pathways along the length of Franklin, and establish pedestrian crossings and/or bridges at the desire paths. The pedestrian/bike way would connect to the existing Bayside trail.

An ongoing initiative in Portland is support of the arts and the creative economy.

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50 http://www.maine.gov/doc/nrimc/mgs/pubs/online/surficial

51 http://www.ci.portland.me.us/planning/603finalreport.pdf

Portland's Arts District centers around Congress St., to the west of Franklin Arterial, where there are galleries, studios, the Maine College of Art, and the Portland Museum of Art. But many artists live and work in less expensive areas like Bayside and the East End. Small galleries and cafes that show paintings and host poetry readings are starting to be established east of Franklin. A walk around East Bayside reveals murals painted by community artists, and sculptures made of found objects. Opportunities to make and exhibit art in public places could be another way of bridging the divide of Franklin Arterial. There could be small event spaces tucked into the blocks adjacent to Franklin, as well as established spaces within the Franklin median for frequently changing interactive art installations. This would provide an incentive for people to move up and down Franklin, and weave across from west to east and back to see and participate in arts events.

Portland is a city known for quality local food. A visit to East Bayside revealed a large community garden on a lot adjacent to Franklin, near Oxford St. In this diverse neighborhood, gardens provide a way to grow vegetables that may not be easily available in Portland. The gardens could be expanded to other plots within the neighborhood, even to the median areas on Franklin.There is one grocery store within walking distance, Whole Foods, at Somerset St. At the south end of Franklin, there are some small Italian markets a few blocks east. Yet given the density of the Bayside and East Bayside neighborhoods, there is not much choice for buying food. A permanent structure that could house a farmer's market would give residents a variety of fresh foods, be a place to sell produce from urban gardens, and create a gathering space that weaves the

neighborhoods together. A marketplace with local produce, baked goods, meat, fish and cheese would also draw people from downtown.

Many cities allow food trucks, which are a way to get a small business going, as well as providing cheap and tasty meals. This is something that Portland is considering allowing, with restrictions. The site could have an space for a changing roster of food trucks to work from. This could draw people up from the courthouse and Middle St. offices at lunchtime, be a place to pick up food while walking home in the evening, or become a place to gather and eat while out for a walk or bike ride. In other cities, the presence of food truck have enlivened neighborhoods.

Franklin Arterial is a busy vehicular route from I-295 into downtown Portland, and people have been using it for over 40 years now. The proposal would not eliminate vehicles in any way, but would enhance the underutilized median and surrounding residual space to create a safe and human scale environment that encourages people to walk, to explore the local streets, and that begins the process of weaving together the neighborhoods that were torn apart so long ago.

Figure 22: Franklin Arterial looking east

CHAPTER 6

THE THESIS PROJECT: TRANSFORMATION OF URBAN PUBLIC SPACE

The Overview

Franklin Arterial was once a neighborhood scale city street, with mixed uses of residential and small businesses. Near the foot of Franklin St., near the harbor, the Portland Company manufactured steel rail and locomotives for over 100 years.[52] After the urban renewal program of the early 1960's, the neighborhood was demolished and divided.[53] The result was a four lane divided highway, surrounded by the residual space of parking lots, vacant lots, and semi-vacant industrial sites. There are also some housing projects in the area. Yet, on each side of the highway and it's residual space, there are still the vital neighborhoods of East and West Bayside, home to small residential buildings and local businesses.

Concepts and Precedents

Site analysis led to the development of the following program for the Franklin Arterial: The highway will be restored to neighborhood scale as a two lane street. A bicycle/pedestrian path will be created on the current northern lanes. This will connect with the existing paths that run along Marginal Way and Commercial St, linking the Franklin area to the loop around the peninsula. With traffic slowed by the changes in the roadway, there will be stop signs and pedestrian crossings at the areas where current

52 http://www.mainememory.net
53 http://franklinstreet.us/history-of-franklin-arterial

desire paths exist. Federal St., which is now severed by Franklin, will be reconnected. Existing parks, such as Kennedy Park to the northwest, Lincoln Park on Congress St., and the Bayside urban garden (which will be expanded) will be linked by green spaces, to form a chain of parks along the Franklin corridor. Throughout this area, there will be several hardscaped sites that will function as art/performance spaces. A new public market building, located on the current parking site at Franklin and Congress, will serve as a neighborhood node, to connect not only East and West Bayside, but to connect the neighborhoods on either side of Congress St. The concept for the building is to be a flexible space that will allow a variety of activities. There are mixed use buildings proposed for the future along the north side of Franklin Street to give closure to Lincoln Park, and to bring increased activity to the area.

Precedents are featured which have been studied in regard to public use of former residual space, such as the Highline and Open Air Library, for architectural intervention to revitalize older buildings and neighborhoods, such as the Santa Caterina Market, and for space and structure, such as Waterloo Station and Southern Cross Station.

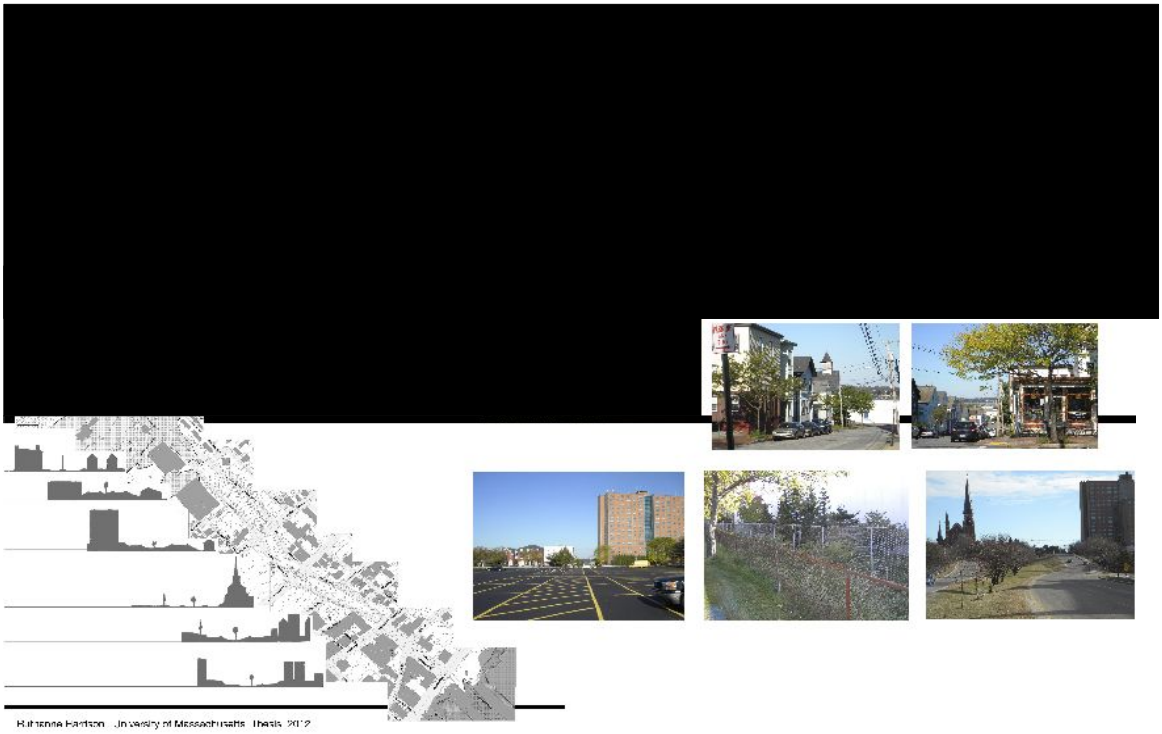

Figure 23: An Overview, figures on file with the Architecture Department

Figure 24: Concepts and Precedents, figures on file with the Architecture Department

The Site Plans

Site plan 1 illustrates how existing circulation will be changed for both pedestrians and vehicles. Also shown is how existing voids in the urban fabric will be activated by architectural intervention. Some of the existing unsafe footpaths along the roadway are pictured, with an overall site plan diagramming where the new pedestrian paths will be located. The plan also designates the location of art sites, new and expanded green spaces, and new buildings.

Site Plan 2 zooms in on the building site, a current parking lot of approximately 400' x 400'. There is also an analysis of building scales adjacent to the site, which aid in the scaling of the new market building. While it should be an iconic building for Portland, it should not compete in height with the prominent buildings on the skyline, and it should be scaled to the surrounding residential areas.

Materials found adjacent to the site, such as granite, brick, metal panels, and wood will inform the materials to be used in the new public market and surrounding landscaping. There will be a path through the site and market building connecting Cumberland St. to Congress St., and a parking garden on the west side of the market, with space for food trucks to park.

The siting of the market along Congress St. provides an edge condition for Lincoln Park, which will help to make it into a more successful space. A ramp connects the pedestrian/bike path to the interior of the market, allowing people to access the market form the other side of Franklin both by bike and on foot. The ramp clearance allows traffic to pass beneath in Franklin St.

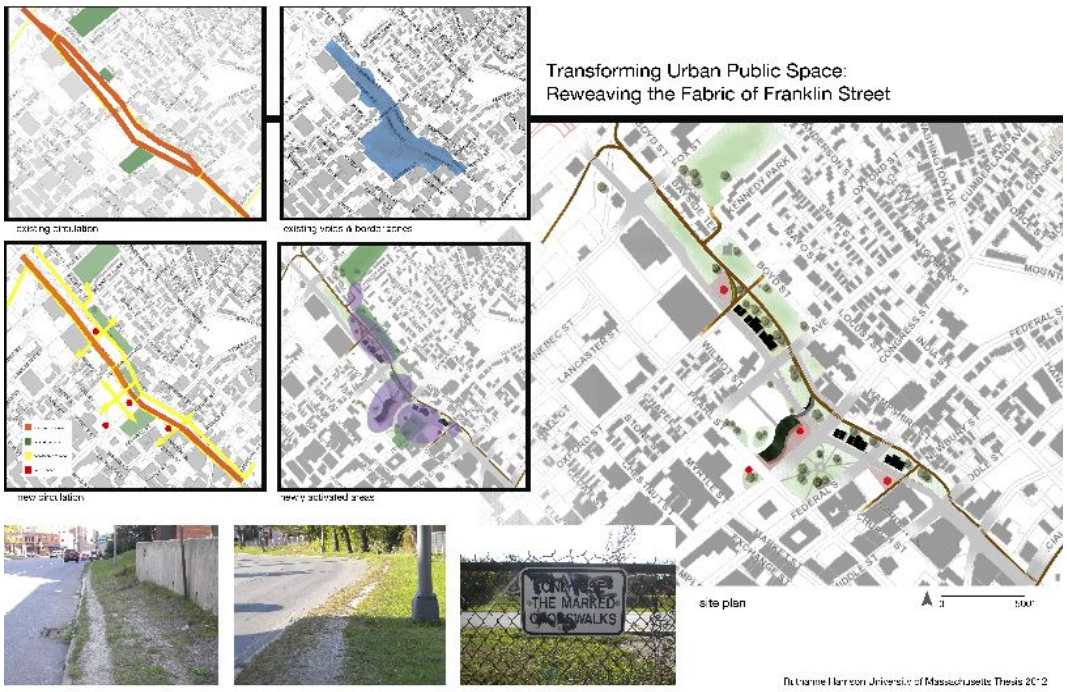

Figure 25: Site Plan 1

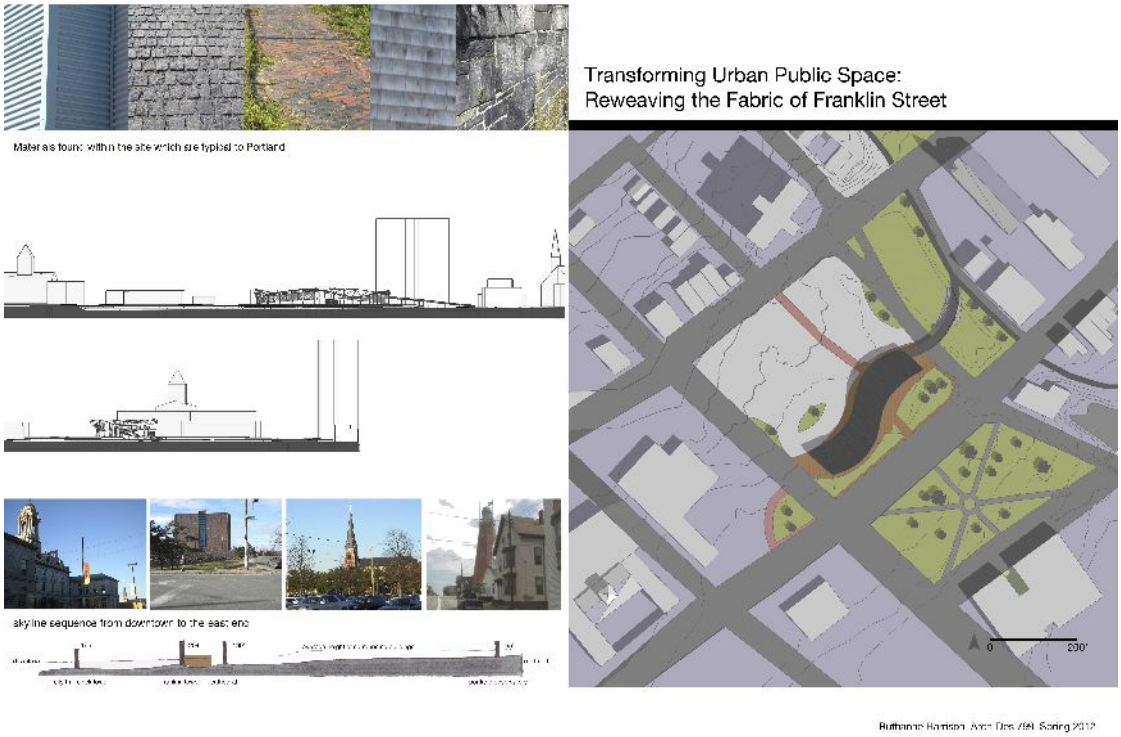

Figure 26: Site Plan 2

The Public Market

The Franklin Street Public Market serves as a node to reunite the surrounding neighborhoods, as well as to unite the areas on either side of Congress St. It provides a space to gather, to buy and sell local garden produce, or to stage a performance. The flexibility of the space allows for a variety of changing uses over any given period of time.

There are many local farms in Maine. Vendors could sell vegetables, fruit, dairy, meat, seafood, flowers, herbs, baked goods, jams and sauces, and beverages. There is also opportunity for the sale of artwork, crafts, and other locally made items. Rather that the traditional market stalls, vendors at the Franklin St. Market would rent specially designed market carts to display their goods. Rentals would be based on how many carts the vendor needs to rent, either by day, week or month. This flexibility would allow for the full-time farmer to have a big display year round, or for a local resident to rent one cart to sell some tomatoes she has grown in the Bayside Community Garden on a seasonal basis.

The market floor space is accessible through several 10' x10' garage doors. Vendors can pull their trucks up to the doors, unload onto the market carts, and then arrange them for the day. The public can enter through doors on any side of the market, or through the ramp entrance from the bike path. In the warmer weather, the garage doors can remain open, allowing air circulation through the market. The market footprint is 60' x 365', 21900 square feet of space. The building elevation ranges from 16' to 32'. There are two

core areas that are not flexible: a core on the west side to house the restrooms, a demonstration kitchen, and coolers, and a core on the east side to house offices, a mechanical room, and storage for market carts. The structure of the building consists of glulam beams and tubular steel columns. The exterior materials are stacked stone, corten steel, hardieboard, and a curtain wall. The interior also reflects these materials, as well as having a polished concrete floor for ease of cleaning.

On the north side of the interior, there is a wide staircase leading to a deck. The deck could be used as an eating area, or as a performance area for lunchtime concerts. Alternately, there could be an after-hours performance or meeting held on the market floor, and the wide stairs could serve as seating. The concept of the market space is to remain as flexible as possible. The more hours per day that the space can be used, the more successful the activation of the surrounding neighborhood will be. Ideally, the market will be owned and administered by the city, and residents will be able to use the space for public activities after market hours. It would be possible for a groups to use the space for concerts, plays, meetings, art shows, block parties, or any other type of community activity. The ability to program the activities that happen within the market give community residents a sense of ownership over the space, and a sense of belonging within the space. The daily market activities and the after hours events will also draw tourists and business people up from the areas east of Congress St., and the connections through the market via the ramp and the path to Cumberland St. will encourage exploration of the surrounding neighborhoods and the art/performance and green spaces along Franklin St.

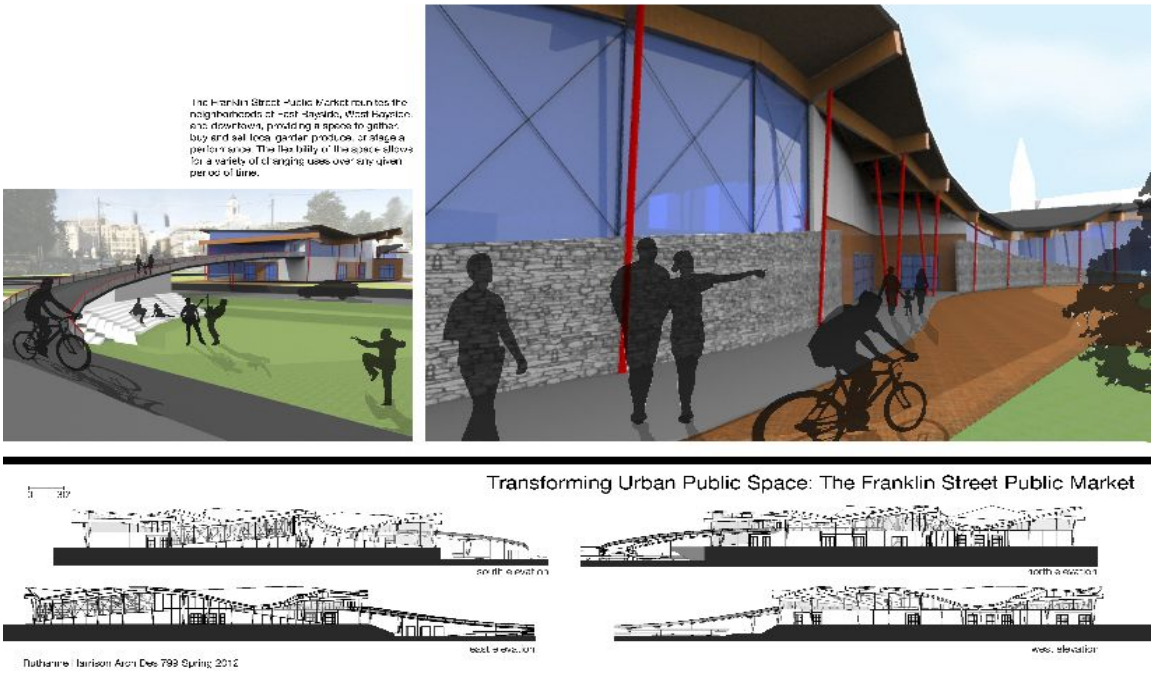

Figure 27: The Market Exterior

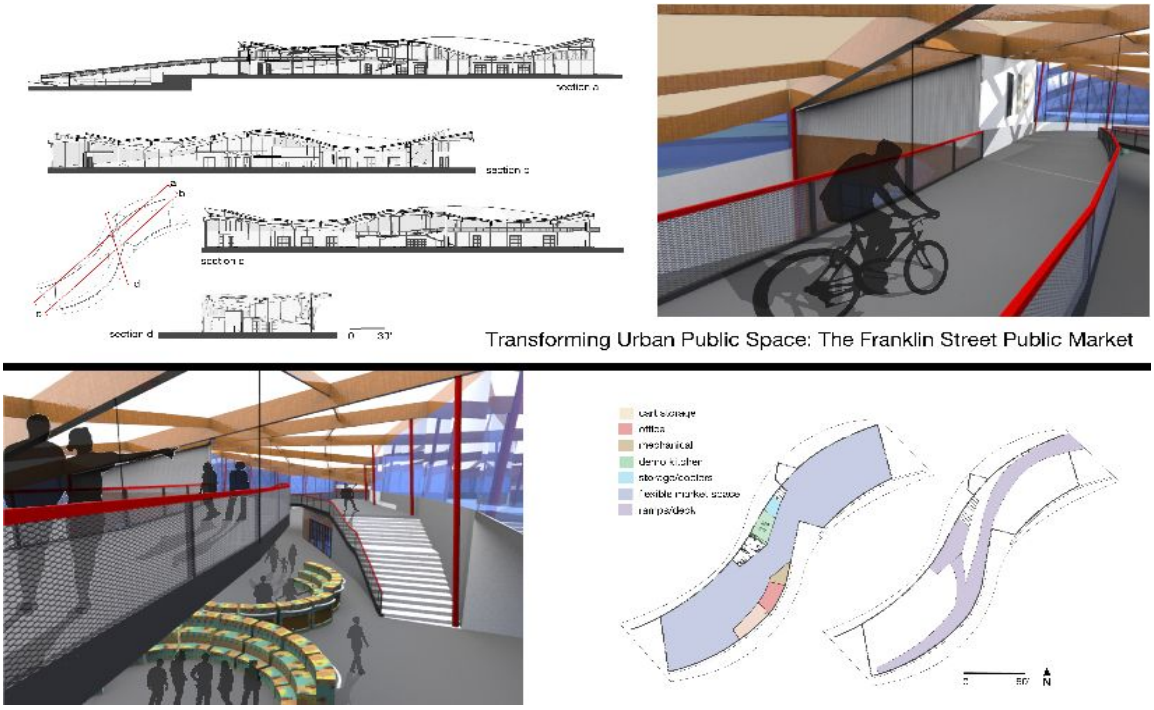

Figure 28: The Market Interior

The Market Carts

The Franklin St. market carts represent the integration of art and performance within the utilitarian program of the space. The carts, as described in the previous section, are used during market hours to display the goods for sale. After hours, they can be easily cleaned off, and used for their secondary purpose: seating for event within and outside of the public market building.

The carts, which are 45" tall and 45" wide, have a curved back surface for forming circular seating when grouped together. They each contain a storage compartment in the back, handles and locking wheels to make them moveable. The concept is to have artists paint, collage, mosaic, or apply graphics to the carts, thereby making each one an individual piece of art. The carts can be moved throughout the neighborhood, along the ramp, bikeway or sidewalks to the other art/performance spaces. The artist-designed carts being pushed in a line through the streets will be a performance of sorts in itself: the site of a line of carts moving will signal to people that an event will be taking place nearby.

Those carts not in use can be stored on the interior of the market in a space beneath the ramp. The storage openings are sized so that the carts "plug" in, exposing the backs of the carts to the market so that the art on them creates a colorful display. Winter storage for carts can be in the small structure beneath the exterior part of the ramp, in the green space across Franklin St., where in the summer a bicycle rental is located.

The carts will be made out of a lightweight, durable, easily maintained material. The carts are a visible and physical connection that links the market to the surrounding market to the surrounding Franklin St. site, and to the arts community of Portland.

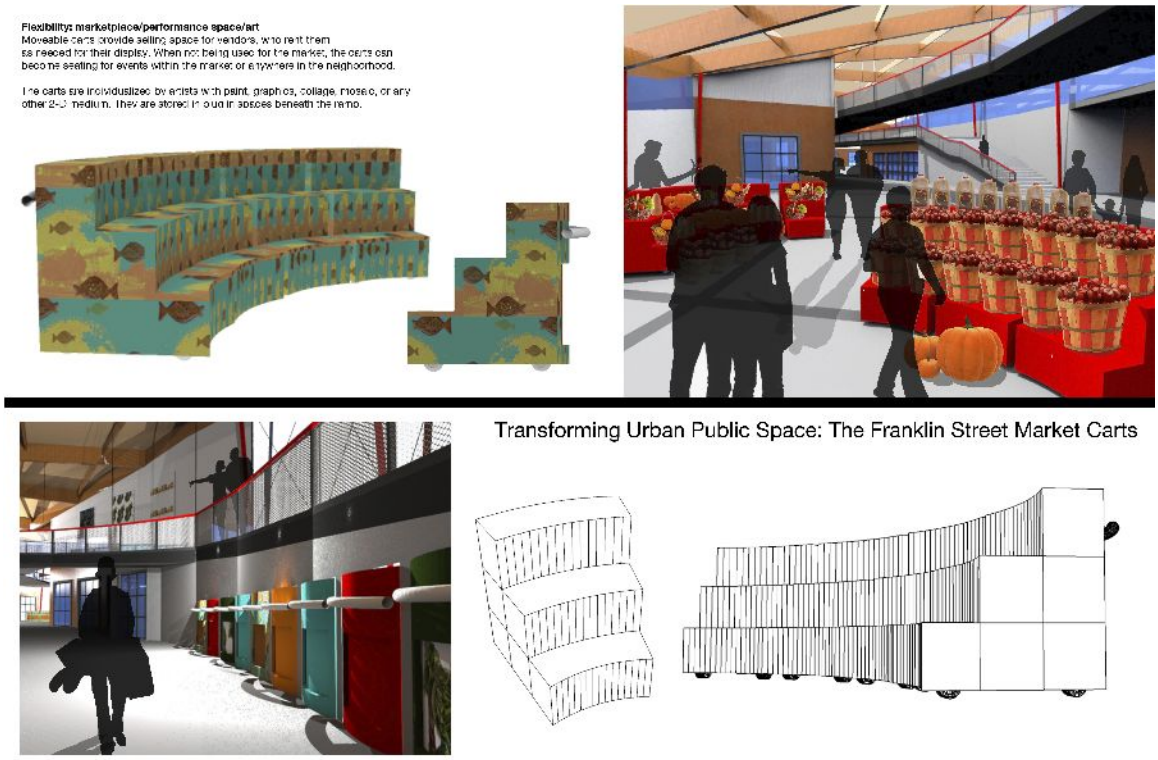

Figure 29: The Market Carts

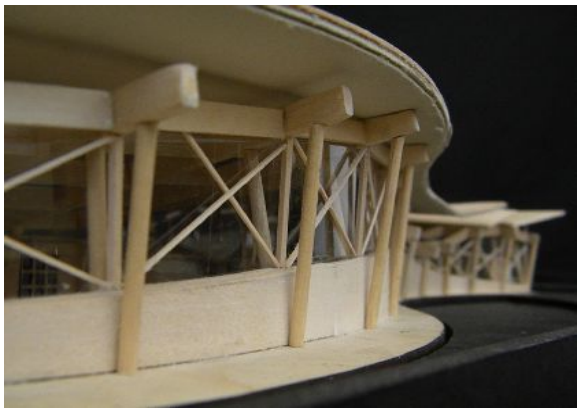

Figure 30: The Building Model

Figure 31: The Site Model

CHAPTER 7

CONCLUSION

The Influence of Research on the Thesis

The research conducted on how architectural and artistic intervention can transform residual space into vital public space has informed each step of my thesis design process. Gordon Matta-Clarks's work brought up issues of creating a building that would visibly reveal it's structure and function, and make use of materials found in the local landscape. Also integral to Matta-Clark's influence is the concept of allowing the building's function to be changed over time by the users of the space: carts moved in and out, garage doors and windows opened to blur the distinction between interior and exterior.

The studies of the Highline opened up the possibilities of linking the neighborhoods of the Franklin St. area through paths, green spaces and hardscaped event spaces, and of making the area a place that could be used by visitors to the city as well as residents. The precedents of the Open Air Library and Le Interstice 56 were crucial to developing a concept of a truly democratic public space that the residents would have a sense of ownership over. The concept of moveable event space, which led to the market cart idea, was inspired by Spacebuster.

The other artists work that I looked at, Christo and Rachel Whiteread, reinforced the concept of temporality, of allowing spaces that could change over time, generating an interest and curiosity that a permanent work of art may not achieve. Again, this concept was crucial to the development of the flexible market space and the market carts that

could be designed by artists and moved around to various spaces.

Perhaps most of all, my thesis was shaped as a response to the ongoing dialogue of the past several decades between urban theorists and urban planners. Specifically, I was influenced by the seemingly opposite urban theories of Robert Moses and Jane Jacobs. The original Franklin Arterial design probably would not have existed without the influence of Moses, and Jacobs' writings gave me a framework with which to critique and reconsider the Franklin Arterial area.

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